

WHAT SHALL THE STATE SOCIETIES DO AFTER REGISTRATION IS SECURED?*

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THE primary object of nearly if not quite all of the state societies of graduate nurses was for the purpose of securing state registration, and so long as the stimulus of a definite object was present interest and activity did not flag; but already evidences are not lacking to indicate that some of our state societies are like many middle-aged women whose daughters are all married and comfortably settled for life, who sit down in the easiest chair to be found and speedily become rotund, indolent and hopelessly uninteresting.

An organization differs little from an individual in many ways and must have some definite object to strive after or it soon drifts into a merely passive perfunctory machine of no particular use to any one concerned. In the report of one of the Maryland meetings Miss Packard, the president, made the statement that the state societies should be post-graduate schools and certainly the right idea has never been better expressed.

The question then resolves itself into how can this post-graduate work be done in a way to give the greatest benefit to the nurses of this or any state?

The writer has more than once been impressed with the need of a closer working relation between the state board of examiners and the state society. The state board of examiners are in a position to learn the weak points in the training given in every hospital in the state, and from outside states as well, and it would seem that if the chairman of the board of examiners, would make a statement at the annual meetings of what lines of study were needed to bring up the average of the state, that such a statement would prove an excellent guide for the program committee, and also be valuable to many of the superintendents of training schools in this work of training pupils.

In choosing subjects and writers for such topics, which serve as a sort of review, care must be taken to have them presented in an interesting as well as instructive manner; no graduate nurse wishes to be addressed as if she were a probationer. One of the great defects in

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papers of this kind is the lack of proper references. Nurses who were graduated six, eight or ten years ago are often at a loss to know where they may find the best and newest presentation of a subject, and papers written for this kind of review are much more valuable when authorities are cited.

The state societies usually have quarterly or semi-annual meetings, and it would seem that brief papers reciting the newest developments and nursing treatment in medicine, surgery, obstetrics and children should never be omitted.

The writer would make a strong plea for subjects which will be particularly helpful to the private duty nurse, whose work and welfare are very often pushed aside for the more spectacular work of the visiting or hospital nurse. The private nurses are the bone and sinew of our nursing organizations and should and might have more help and consideration. That they do not, however, is largely their own fault, the writer admits, as the greater proportion of them absolutely refuse to take a more active part, which is a great mistake. The record of a private duty nurse's experiences would be invaluable to the young nurse at the beginning of her career.

One kind of work the writer would very much like to see taken up by the state societies is that of compiling nursing statistics. In the various census reports one may find vital statistics which include nurses, but one never knows whether a child's nurse-maid or a graduate nurse is meant.

There are two special points which need to be cleared up regarding nurses; first, the death-rate and cause of death, and second, the duration of their nursing life. The latter should be considered apart from those who end their nursing careers by marriage.

Ever since the writer was a probationer she has heard two traditions regarding nurses; one that a very large proportion die of tuberculosis, and the other that ten years is the average duration of a woman's nursing life. It would not be a difficult undertaking for the state societies to keep records for five years and clear up these points, which would be vastly interesting to every nurse and to medical statisticians as well.

Another subject which claims our attention is the welfare of nurses. The peculiar conditions under which all nurses work both in and out of the hospitals produce peculiar results often grave and disastrous. Too much work and too little companionship and healthy amusement cannot fail to wreak physical, mental or moral revenge upon the most robust human being, and not one among you who has been a nurse for five years or more but can recall sadly to mind mental, moral and physical

wrecks, which might possibly have been avoided by different environment. Nurses' clubs have proved invaluable in the very large cities but many nurses object strongly to living in an atmosphere which is necessarily too full of "shop talk," and in smaller cities and towns clubs for nurses are wholly out of the question.

The subject is one which the state societies should thoroughly investigate, and probably out of the mass of information obtained some practical and definite points for the betterment of nurse's welfare, both in training and after graduation would result.

The work so far suggested has been wholly within and for the welfare of the nurses in the state, but a state like a well-ordered household cannot confine its interests entirely to its own affairs. There must be mutual interests in neighboring states and in national affairs and some little time should always be assigned for their consideration at every state meeting. For instance Indiana, Illinois and Michigan lie so closely together that no very great expense would be involved if a joint meeting every two years were held in rotation in the different states. This coming together is extremely pleasant, interesting and profitable. The more we know of one another the better off we are. It is a great comfort to find that our neighbors have the same problems to struggle over that we have.

In the national organizations, the superintendent's society, the associated alumnae and the state societies should always keep in close touch. To many nurses these organizations seem far away and of little interest; but this should not be the case, for to the work of both of these societies we owe not only state registration, but the vast strides which have taken place in the betterment of nurse's training, our *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING* and the course in hospital economies, all originated in these societies, and without them we would soon lapse into the aimless ineffective body which existed not less than fifteen years ago. Welded together the alumnae societies, state societies, and national organizations, may be a mighty power for the good of nurses and nursing, and the state society should make a special mission of keeping the various alumnae societies in close touch with the associated alumnae. For instance, the choice of a delegate from the state association should be made with extreme care; she should be a woman who has had much experience and with good judgment to decide upon the important questions arising in the associated alumnae meetings, one who is particularly well-informed upon all subjects pertaining to nursing, and every alumnae society in the state she represents should be informed that she will represent the state, that they may in turn let their delegates know who will be the state repre-

sentative. Too often the alumnae delegates are sent to the associated alumnae meeting with the vaguest instructions, and with their inexperience and ignorance, are blown hither and yon by every opinion they hear around them, while if they knew who the state delegate was they could go to her for information and advice. The state delegate should also be furnished with a list of the alumnae delegates and in this way much benefit would be derived for all concerned.

In closing the writer begs to add a few words to the individual nurse.

In very homely words, the bane of all organized effort in this world are the people who will "neither fish nor cut bait." Nursing work is inclined to be narrowing; if we are hospital nurses in any capacity we are liable to become so bound up in the complex routine of our daily lives that we almost forget that any world exists outside the four walls of our hospitals; if we are private duty nurses we are largely cut off from the natural activities of life and tend to become self-centered, and worse than all self-pitying; and thus it becomes a duty to guard ourselves from falling into such deep ruts that we cannot see the needs of our neighbors.

The nursing organizations are not always managed to suit our individual liking; but we all have the privilege of free speech, and the power of the ballot to change the management, and we should never forget that whatever our organizations are they are *exactly what nurses* have made them.

No nurse has the moral right to stand aloof from organized effort for the betterment of nursing; every one among us is indebted to every nurse before us from the creation, and we too have a duty to those who are to follow us, and it behooves each one of us to ask herself what she has done to help or hinder the next generation of nurses. We may say that it is none of our business but we cannot run away from our obligations; sooner or later we must all give an accounting. No woman should dare to nurse who does not keep herself informed of all that goes on in the nursing world. The alumnae society and the state society will do much for her but she must constantly read and study or she will become hopelessly behind in a very short time.

On the other hand we have, like all professions, certain ones who are so hide-bound that they neither know nor think of anything but "shop." Anything more tedious than a nurse who can find nothing to talk about but her patients' symptoms, and what the doctor said I do not believe exists; one always has a desire to change the subject to millinery or something else more enlivening. I recently heard of a man who when engaging a nurse said he didn't want one to instruct

him in bacteriology and surgical technique, he preferred one who would talk about clothes or who would tell him the neighborhood gossip, and personally I confess to a very responsive feeling on the subject.

Because nursing is a serious, often sorrowful and painful round of duty, makes it all the more necessary that nurses should be optimistic and cheerful in their whole attitude toward life; not machine-like cheerfulness which is so depressing, but a good wholesome lively interest in all the world, and a capacity for finding things so bad that they are funny. Nothing is truer than the saying that "a lively sense of humor will carry a woman through where religion fails."



BY MEANS OF WHAT INFLUENCES COULD ENORMOUS IMPROVEMENT
IN HEALTH BE OBTAINED?

FIRST, by providing clean air, free of smoke, dust (especially city dust containing horse manure), and noxious gases, which would be possible through clean streets, proper sewage and plumbing, ventilation of schools, railway cars, factories, public buildings and dwellings; the abolition of unsanitary tenement houses; and the education of the public as to the necessity of pure air.

Second, by pure water sources, uncontaminated by sewage or factory refuse.

Third, by pure milk and other foods free from noxious preservatives and infection.

Fourth, by the suppression of quackery in medicine, resulting in the disuse of nostrums, opium "soothing syrups," alcoholic "sarsaparillas," etc.

Fifth, by knowledge on the part of the public of a few simple facts as to preventive medicine and hygiene.

Sixth, by the establishment of a health ideal as a national ambition, such as proposed by Galton and in part realized by ancient Greeks and modern Japanese. As President Roosevelt said, "The preservation of national vigor should be a matter of patriotism."—*Public Health Catechism*.